

ABSENCE FROM THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. CRENSHAW. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained in my congressional district on Monday, September 24, 2007. I respectfully request the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to reflect that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 891 on motion to suspend the rules and pass House Concurrent Resolution 193; "yea" on rollcall vote No. 892 on motion to suspend the rules and pass House Resolution No. 668; "yea" on rollcall vote No. 893 on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1199 and "yea" on rollcall vote No. 894 on motion to suspend the rules and pass House Resolution 340.

COOPER-WOLF: THE SAFE
COMMISSION ACT

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I am deeply concerned about the financial future of our Nation. Yesterday, Representative JIM COOPER and I introduced the SAFE Commission Act, H.R. 3654, legislation that would establish a bipartisan commission to review Federal spending. Everything would be on the table—entitlements and tax policies—mandating Congress to vote up or down based on the commission's findings. Democrats and Republicans must work together to ensure that our country regains sound financial footing. I insert for the RECORD my statement from the press conference introducing the SAFE Commission Act.

Thank you for being here today. I am hopeful that by joining efforts with Jim Cooper, our colleagues in the House and Senate will embrace this bipartisan commission that can put our country on sound financial footing.

I also want to thank you, David Walker, for your vision and your courage in laying the groundwork for the legislation we offer today.

David and the others participating in the Fiscal Wake-up Tour—the Heritage Foundation, Brookings Institution, Concord Coalition, Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget—have been crisscrossing America from San Francisco to Cincinnati, from Tampa to Buffalo—laying out the facts about the future financial condition of our country, discussing possible options and preparing the way for tough choices that those of us in Congress are going to have to make.

When you look at this tour ensemble, you see groups who usually disagree more than they agree on policy issues. That makes it even more extraordinary that they all agree that we need to sit down and work together to make sure our country doesn't fall into a financial canyon that we can never climb out of. That's the message that is resonating with folks who hear them—the need to come together and work to find bipartisan answers to ensure a secure financial future for America.

What the tour has told us, too, is that we shouldn't underestimate the willingness and

ability of the American people to hear the truth and support the decisions necessary to change our financial course.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to start the process today. We cannot continue to avoid our responsibility to future generations of Americans by passing on a broken system in the form of unfunded Social Security and Medicare and obligations and unsustainable spending. We cannot continue to keep borrowing and mortgaging our future to countries like China and Saudi Arabia that carry obscene amounts of our debt.

But the question is asked, why the SAFE Commission? If this is such a critical issue, shouldn't Congress deal with it?

Yes, it is a critical issue—maybe the most important one facing our country. And yes, it is the responsibility of elected officials to act.

Our financial issues are real. Our economic growth will come to a grinding halt, our standard of living and even our national security will be at risk if we don't start actively working to change our current course.

But I'm going to be candid—Congress on its own can't get it done in the politically charged atmosphere in Washington today. I describe Congress today as dysfunctional. The latest public opinion polls perhaps validate my assessment.

The American people expect us to put our partisan differences aside and work together to get things done. We must move beyond the politics and come to grips with the fact that the financial future of our country is an American issue. It's not red or blue or Republican or Democrat.

Under the SAFE Commission process, Congress is the ultimate decision-maker.

But it will be the SAFE Commission, after holding hearings across the country, listening to the American people, and putting everything on the table for discussion—entitlements and tax policies—which will send its recommendations to Congress for a mandatory up-or-down vote like the BRAC (The Base Closing Commission) process to decide what military bases to keep open or close.

Congress will be part of the SAFE process—has a place at the table. We even hold out hope that Congress could find its way and act on its own. First, at least four of the 14 congressionally appointed commission members must be sitting Members of Congress. Second, if Congress enacts significant legislation aimed at addressing this looming crisis, the SAFE Commission would terminate and cease to exist. We hope this happens, but, I doubt it will.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." I believe there is a moral component to this issue that goes to the heart of who we are as Americans. By that I mean, I wonder if we have lost the national will to make tough decisions that may require sacrifice?

The SAFE Commission offers us the opportunity to find our way forward to protect the future of our country.

My youngest grandchild is just over a year old. By the time he is 15 years old, 29 cents out of every dollar paid in income taxes will be required to cover the needs of Social Security and Medicare to pay for my retirement.

By the time he completes his undergraduate degree, more than 45 cents out of every dollar of income taxes then will be needed to cover the shortfall of Social Security and Medicare. That will rise to 62 cents out of every dollar if he decides to get his doctorate 10 years later.

Sadly, before he retires—and looks into the eyes of his own grandchildren—retired baby boomers will be consuming 88 percent of

every income tax dollar. With the baby boomers consuming so much, there will be little money left to meet the needs and challenges of future generations—for instance ensuring that our highways and bridges are safe, that there is money for cancer research and to solve the riddles of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, that we can take care of our veterans, that we have the resources to ensure our schools are the best in the world so our children and grandchildren get the necessary tools, particularly in math and science, to compete in the world marketplace.

Is it right for one generation to live very well knowing that its debts will be left to be paid for by their children and grandchildren?

I'm challenging our colleagues today to come together—to know that while you served in Congress you did everything in your power to provide the kind of security and way of life for your children and grandchildren that your parents and grandparents worked so hard to provide for you.

The challenge, too, goes out to the leadership in Congress and the administration to make this a truly bipartisan effort and put the SAFE Commission on the fast track to enactment.

LEGALIZING INTERNET GAMBLING
WOULD HARM U.S. TRADE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, as I stated here a couple of months ago, I believe very strongly that whatever our policy is on other types of gambling, we need to maintain a firm line against any form of sports gambling. Gambling on sports events undermines the integrity of American athletics. It can create corruption or the appearance of corruption, and it taints the image of sports as wholesome, family-friendly entertainment.

I also stated that I opposed legalization of online sports gambling in H.R. 2046. It is not enough to allow sports associations to say "not on my game" if Congress is sending the message to the public that sports gambling is fine. If we are going to consider any loosening of laws against online gambling, we need to say "not on sports, period."

But yesterday I received a letter from Stuart Eizenstat, a very well-respected trade expert who was formerly U.S. Ambassador to the European Union and Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, writing on behalf of the National Football League. Ambassador Eizenstat's letter informs me that, under the present circumstances, even "not on sports, period" could leave the NFL and other great American athletic institutions vulnerable to assault by the offshore gambling interests who want to make money off the popularity of these games.

According to Ambassador Eizenstat's letter, a law that legalizes most online gambling but includes limited exceptions, such as a sports gambling exception, will be vulnerable to attack in the World Trade Organization. If the WTO rules against the U.S. law, the U.S. would have to choose between eliminating the exception—feeding our treasured sports to the gambling wolves—or paying billions in compensation to our trading partners. I, for one, think we should avoid having to decide which of these is the lesser of two evils if we can.

It appears that the U.S. does have a way out, by withdrawing any commitments to free trade in gambling. The U.S. Trade Representative is currently in the middle of negotiating this withdrawal. But this requires compensation too, for taking away market access from our trading partners. How much compensation? Not much at all, given that almost all Internet gambling is illegal. But if we make it legal, even if sports gambling is excluded, then there is a big legal market for which we will owe compensation.

As Ambassador Eizenstat says, "withdrawal negotiations should be brought to a conclusion before Congress passes any new gambling legislation." In the interest of protecting American athletics, I plan to take this advice to heart.

Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to enter Ambassador Eizenstat's letter into the record.

FLOOD INSURANCE REFORM AND MODERNIZATION ACT (HR 3121)

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3121, the Flood Insurance Reform and Modernization Act. This reauthorization and update of the National Flood Insurance Program is needed to ensure all home and business owners in flood zones have the ability to plan for the worst and purchase an appropriate level of coverage.

In 2005, we witnessed the extreme case of storm damage. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita showed that insurance companies try to blame wind damage on water. Too many lawsuits have been filed to try to resolve the dispute. This bill creates an option: homeowners can purchase a multiperil policy that will pay them for hurricane damage, whether caused by the wind or storm surge.

H.R. 3121 also includes language to further encourage to my constituents on Long Island to purchase flood insurance. A recent study has shown the southern shore of Long Island would be flooded if a Category 1 storm were to strike the area. That flood zone pushes further north on with each intensifying category. The affected areas on Long Island are home to middle-class and businesses. Under H.R. 3121, the maximum coverage for a home increases from \$250,000 to \$335,000; for residential contents from \$100,000 to \$135,000; and for non-residential properties from \$500,000 to \$670,000. These provisions will ensure that flood insurance participants on Long Island will be able to pick up the pieces and start over following a hurricane.

The bill includes another little discussed provision that I strongly support. Most people don't realize that today their finished basement family or media room and its contents are not protected by flood insurance because that room is located below ground level. As more families add on to their homes rather than move to larger homes, basements are becoming another room, often more important than the traditional living room. H.R. 3121 allows optional coverage for improvements and personal property located in basements.

Too many people who should be purchasing flood insurance have no protection. Some people they live too far from the coast. Others don't realize that their homes are in a flood plain and learn this fact, to their dismay, only after a flash flood destroys their residences. I am pleased that H.R. 3121 funds a program to help communities reach out to residents and encourage them to purchase flood insurance. I commend the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI) who introduced this legislation in the 109th Congress.

It is only a matter of time before a severe hurricane like the Long Island Express of 1938 impacts Long Island. This bill improves current insurance and should encourage more home owners to purchase and retain flood insurance. I encourage the House to pass H.R. 3121 and hope that the Senate also will act quickly to send this important legislation to the President for his signature.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize September as National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. This is a very important designation because it helps to raise awareness about ovarian cancer and its symptoms.

In the State of Connecticut alone, over 300 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year. It is predicted that 190 women in Connecticut will die from ovarian cancer in 2007. Ovarian cancer is the eighth most common female cancer in Connecticut and the fourth most common cause of female cancer death in the State.

Although in the United States approximately 20,000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year and an estimated 15,000 women die of the disease, there is currently no screening test for ovarian cancer. Until there is a cure for this disease it is important to support and recognize the hard work that organizations are doing to raise awareness for this disease and its symptoms. I want to commend organizations like the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, OCNA, for its commitment to ensuring that women are aware of the symptoms of ovarian cancer and for its advocacy on behalf of the women and families who have been touched by this devastating disease.

Early detection of ovarian cancer must be our focus and education and awareness are imperative. Studies have shown that if ovarian cancer is treated before it has spread outside the ovary, the 5-year survival rate is 93 percent. However, only 19 percent of ovarian cancers are found at such an early stage.

I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing September as National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and to work to increase awareness about this deadly disease.

INTRODUCING THE IRAQI REFUGEE AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, RESETTLEMENT AND SECURITY ACT OF 2007

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce a vital piece of legislation to raise awareness of the impending humanitarian crisis and security breakdown as a result of the mass influx of Iraqi refugees into neighboring countries, and the growing internally displaced population in Iraq.

Our legislation addresses this issue by increasing directed accountable assistance to these populations and their host countries, increasing border security, facilitating the resettlement of Iraqis at risk and broadening domestic relocation assistance.

Madam Speaker, whether you agree or disagree with U.S. policy in Iraq, one thing is crystal clear, we have a humanitarian crisis manifesting in the region that cannot be ignored.

Let's examine the facts. Iraqis are now the third-largest displaced population in the world and the fastest-growing refugee population globally. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, estimates that there are some 2.2 million Iraqis displaced internally and at least another 2 million Iraqis have sought refuge in neighboring countries.

Many of these Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons lack adequate food, shelter and other basic services. Further, the massive flow of refugees into neighboring countries is straining the social, economic, and security fabric of the host nations and threatens to destabilize the entire Middle East region.

My own efforts to address this looming calamity began in August when I wrote to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice highlighting the need for the United States to address this devastating situation with strong financial support, either through bilateral assistance or funding for international organizations that are working directly with the refugee and internally displaced populations.

In response to my letter, on September 7, 2007, I, along with Helsinki Commission Co-chairman Senator BENJAMIN L. CARDIN (D-MD) and Helsinki Commissioner Congressman JOSEPH R. PITTS (R-PA), received a briefing by Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, PRM, Ellen Sauerbrey, who had recently returned from the region.

It was clear from our discussion that while the United States has been working to address this grave situation, not nearly enough is being done. The United States has a moral obligation to make a serious commitment to help Iraqi refugees and internally displaced populations while meeting our commitment to resettle Iraqi refugees referred by the UNHCR.

It is precisely for these reasons that I decided to take swift action and address this worsening crisis with comprehensive legislation.

Among the legislation's highlights are an authorization of \$700 million for each fiscal year